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**U.S. ANNOUNCES CHARGES AGAINST IMPORTERS AND
DISTRIBUTORS OF SOUTH ASIAN HEROIN**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, JOHN P. GILBRIDE, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Field Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), and KEVIN DELLI-COLLI, the Acting Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Office of the Department of Homeland Security's United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"), announced today the unsealing of an Indictment and two Complaints charging eight individuals with conspiracy to import multi-kilogram quantities of South Asian heroin into the United States and conspiracy to distribute that heroin within the United States.

The Indictment charges six individuals as members of an organization led by EMMANUEL ORUCHE. According to the Indictment, the Oruche Organization, based in New York and Detroit, was involved in the importation and distribution of multi-kilogram quantities of heroin. The Organization arranged for the importation of heroin from Afghanistan and Pakistan, through various countries including Turkey and Nigeria, into the United States. The Organization used couriers, primarily of West African descent, to import the heroin; some of these couriers transported heroin in suitcases and while others transported the heroin internally. The Organization distributed the heroin to various locations in the United States, including New York, Michigan, and Ohio.

In addition to ORUCHE, five other defendants are named in the Indictment. Specifically, the Indictment alleges that: REBECCA AMBO FOMUM-TIBAH and COSME FREDERIC TIBURCE JEMY served as couriers for the Organization; LINUS IHEUKWU and an individual identified as "Jaster" were customers of the Organization responsible for receiving multi-kilogram quantities of heroin in Ohio and Michigan, respectively; and an individual identified as "Agwu" was a Nigeria-based source of supply for the Organization responsible for sending couriers to the United States.

In addition to the Indictment, the U.S. announced the unsealing of two complaints charging JOSEPH OLUIGBO and FESTUS AFOLABI with conspiracy to import multi-kilogram quantities of heroin into the United States and conspiracy to distribute that heroin within the United States.

ORUCHE and OLUIGBO were arrested earlier today. FOMUM-TIBAH was already in custody on federal drug charges. ORUCHE, FOMUM-TIBAH, and OLUIGBO will be presented today before a United States Magistrate Judge in Manhattan federal court. IHEUKWU and AFOLABI are still at large.

If convicted, each of the defendants face a maximum sentence of life in prison and a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison. The Indictment unsealed today also seeks forfeiture of narcotics proceeds alleged to have been obtained as a result of the Defendants' drug trafficking operations.

The charges announced today were a part of "Operation Hidden Web," a joint investigation conducted by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York; the DEA in Istanbul, Turkey, Lagos, Nigeria, Michigan, Ohio, Rhode Island, and New York; and ICE. Mr. GARCIA praised the outstanding investigative efforts of the DEA and ICE.

The prosecution is being handled by the International Narcotics Trafficking Unit of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. JESSE M. FURMAN and JOSEPH FACCIPONTI are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment and Complaints are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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